

Application No. 09/911,108

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Reply dated 14 April 2004

Responsive to Office Action mailed 24 March 2004

AMENDMENTS TO THE DESCRIPTION

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 1 at line 20 of the application as originally filed with the following rewritten paragraph.

Infants and other incontinent individuals wear absorbent articles such as diapers to absorb and retain urine and other body exudates. Absorbent articles function both to contain the discharged materials and to isolate these materials from the body of the wearer and from the wearer's garments and bed clothing. Disposable absorbent articles having many different basic designs are known in the art. For example, U.S. Patent Re. ~~26,152~~ 26,151, entitled "Disposable Diaper" issued to Duncan and Baker on January 31, 1967, describes a disposable diaper which has achieved wide acceptance and commercial success. U.S. Patent 3,860,003, entitled "Contractable Side Portions For Disposable Diaper", issued to Buell on January 14, 1975, describes an elastic leg cuff disposable diaper which has achieved wide acceptance and commercial success.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 14 at line 17 of the application as originally filed with the following rewritten paragraph.

HIPE-derived foams which provide the requisite distribution properties for use herein are described in copending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/563,866 (DesMarais et al.), filed November 25, 1995 (hereafter referred to as "'866 application"), now U.S. Patent 5,650,222 issued 22 July 1997; U.S. Patent 5,387,207 (Dyer et al.), issued February 7, 1995; and U.S. Patent 5,260,345 (DesMarais et al.), issued November 9, 1993; the disclosure of each of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 15 at line 3 of the application as originally filed with the following rewritten paragraph.

The polymeric foams can be prepared in the form of collapsed (i.e. unexpanded), polymeric foams that, upon contact with aqueous fluids, expand and absorb such fluids. See, for example, ~~copending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/563,866~~ U.S. Patent 5,650,222 issued 22 July 1997 and U.S. Patent 5,387,207. These collapsed polymeric foams are usually obtained by expressing the water phase from the polymerized HIPE foam through compressive forces, and/or thermal drying and/or vacuum dewatering. After compression, and/or thermal drying/vacuum dewatering, the polymeric foam is in a collapsed, or unexpanded state. Non-collapsible foams, such as those described copending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/542,497, now U.S. Patent 5,849,805 issued 15 December 1998, and U.S. Patent 5,260,345 are also useful as the distribution material.

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Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 25 at line 10 of the application as originally filed with the following rewritten paragraph.

Fibers stiffened by crosslink bonds in individualized form (i.e., the individualized stiffened fibers, as well as processes for their preparation) are disclosed, for example, in U.S. Patent 3,224,926 (Bernardin), issued December 21, 1965; U.S. Patent 3,440,135 (Chung), issued April 22, 1969; U.S. Patent 3,932,209 (Chatterjee), issued January 13, 1976; and U.S. Patent 4,035,147 (Sangenis et al.), issued July 12, 1977. More preferred stiffened fibers are disclosed in U.S. Patent 4,822,453 (Dean et al), issued April 18, 1989; U.S. Patent 4,888,093 (Dean et al), issued December 19, 1989; U.S. Patent 4,898,642 (Moore et al), issued February 6, 1990; and U.S. Patent 5,137,537 (~~Herrow~~ Herron et al), issued August 11, 1992, all of which are incorporated by reference.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 27 at line 30 of the application as originally filed with the following rewritten paragraph.

The absorbent cores useful herein may comprise separate components for use in the crotch, front and rear portions of the absorbent core. Figure 5 shows an exploded perspective view depicting the elements of an absorbent core 428. As depicted in Figure 5, the absorbent core 428 comprises a front panel 420 and a back panel 430, both made of absorbent material, preferably material suitable for fluid storage. Figure 5 further shows a center section 451 of absorbent material overlying the front and back panels 420 and 430, wherein the center section 451 is preferably a non-removable absorbent core component that is in fluid communication with front and back panels 420 and 430. The material of this center section 451 comprises a fluid distribution material having the vertical wicking absorbent capacities discussed above, or a material having requisite distribution and storage properties. The front panel 420 and back panel 430 are preferably ~~removeable~~ removable from an absorbent article and can be replaced with similar front and back panel components. The term "removable" as used herein refers to those absorbent core components or members of the absorbent article that are intended to be removed once they become wetted and/or saturated. The term "removable" can apply to absorbent core components, absorbent core members, an insert, or other wetted and/or saturated components of the absorbent article.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 29 at line 11 of the application as originally filed with the following rewritten paragraph.

In a generally flat, unfolded state as depicted in Figure 5, the front panel 420 and back panel 430 are separate absorbent core components positioned such that the inner front end of front panel 420 is opposed to and spaced apart from the inner back end of back panel 430. The distance between the front and back panels may be varied as necessary. In general the distance will increase as the crotch length increases with the size of the absorbent article. The length of the front panel as well as the length of the back panel may be varied independently depending on the specific design of the absorbent article and the

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size of the wearer for which the article is intended. Typically, the front panel 420 has a length as measured along the longitudinal axis of an absorbent article that is less than 50% of the length of the article, preferably less than 40% of the length of the article, more preferably less than 30% of the length of the article. The back panel 430 has a length as measured along the longitudinal axis of an absorbent article that is less than 60% of the length of the article, preferably less than 50% of the length of the article, more preferably less than 40% of the length of the article. The length of the front and back panels 420 and 430 can be varied as long as either panel does not extend from either an absorbent article's front or rear waist region to a point beyond the crotch point of the article. The combined length of the front panel, the length of the back panel, and the spacing between the front and rear panels will essentially determine the overall core length which will vary by size of user and design of the absorbent article. The overall length along the longitudinal axis of the absorbent article is referred to as the rise and can be determined as described in copending Application Serial No. 09/539,763 entitled Device and Method for Identifying a Size of an Absorbent Article Which is Fit Appropriate for a Potential Wearer, filed March 31, 2000 in the names of Bret D. Seitz, Gary D. LaVon, and David M. Weirich, now U.S. Patent 6,488,202 issued 3 December 2002, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 31 at line 26 of the application as originally filed with the following rewritten paragraph.

The front and back panels 420 and 430 can also be removed and replaced from an absorbent article by attaching a finger or hand ~~pocket inserter~~ insertion pocket to the front or back panel as shown in Figures 11 and 12. Front and back panels 420 and 430 which comprise a finger or hand ~~pocket inserter~~ insertion pocket 800 are constructed such that the ~~inserter~~ insertion pocket is attached to a substantially liquid impervious outer layer 810 which covers at least one side of front panel 420 or back panel 430. The ~~inserter~~ insertion pocket is attached such that it is opposite a substantially fluid pervious material such as a transfer layer that is suitable for transfer of fluid from an acquisition/distribution component to the removable storage/redistribution front panel 420 or back panel 430. The insertion ~~means~~ pocket is designed such that the user can slip their fingers or hand into the insertion pocket with the ~~inserter~~ insertion pocket either ~~laying~~ lying in the palm of their hand, or positioned on the outside of their fingers with the ~~inserter~~ insertion pocket ~~laying~~ lying on top of their hand as shown in Figure 12. In other words, the hand can be inserted into the insertion pocket palm side toward the removable absorbent core component or with the palm side of the hand away from the absorbent core component. The user can then select the orientation of their hand to ~~complement~~ complement their position relative to the wearer, for example, if they are standing behind the wearer they may choose one orientation of the ~~inserter~~ insertion pocket while on the other hand if they were standing in front of the wearer reaching over or around in the case of insertion of a back panel absorbent core component, the wearer then may choose an alternative orientation of the ~~inserter~~ insertion pocket.

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Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 32 at line 7 of the application as originally filed with the following rewritten paragraph.

Additionally, the position of the fluid transfer opening, ~~opening~~ between the acquisition/distribution layer and the storage/redistribution material of the ~~inserter~~ insertion pocket-containing front panel 420 or back panel 430 ~~[[.]]~~ can also influence the orientation of the ~~users~~ user's hand and the ~~inserter~~ insertion pocket. The flexibility in orientation allows the user or wearer of the article to properly align the fluid transfer opening(s) in the article to the fluid transfer opening(s) on the substantially fluid pervious side of the front panel 420 or back panel 430 to ensure proper fluid transfer from the acquisition/distribution materials to the storage/redistribution materials. The finger insertion pocket ~~inserter~~ may comprise a fibrous nonwoven material, either hydrophobic or hydrophilic, a substantially liquid impermeable film material, an elastomeric film material, or combinations thereof. In an alternative embodiment, the finger insertion pocket ~~inserter~~ may comprise an elastomeric material as the overall pocket or as an additional component attached to the aforementioned materials. In yet a further embodiment, the finger insertion pocket ~~inserter~~ may be highly extensible allowing the insertion pocket ~~inserter~~ to be extended and then wrapped over the removable or replaceable ~~inserter~~ insertion pocket-containing front panel 420 or back panel 430 once the panel is removed and folded allowing for clean and easy disposal of the used ~~inserter~~ insertion pocket-containing front panel 420 or back panel 430. In a different embodiment, the finger insertion pocket ~~inserter~~ may be detachable along the side portions of front panel 420 or back panel 430 such that it forms a flap that can be wrapped around the end of the panel in order to cover the fluid transfer region for sanitary handling and disposal.